

**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony**

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Good evening Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I am part of the leadership team of InterCommunity, a nonprofit organization serving Connecticut's residents for more than forty years and providing a broad range of addiction, mental health, and primary medical care services, mostly to those who have the least personal resources. I am also a person in long term recovery.

I have been here to testify in previous years' hearings and appreciate the many challenges facing our State and facing you as the Appropriations Committee as the budget process proceeds. As we address a \$1.7 billion shortfall in the FY18 budget, though, it is important to keep in the forefront that more than half a million individuals in Connecticut depend on life-sustaining services provided by Connecticut's community nonprofit providers. In my time today, I would like to raise two themes for your consideration.

The first is that our State's community nonprofit providers can be a substantial part of the solution – cost-effective, high quality services provided in the community have been and can further be part of the solution to the State's financial problems, through the shifting of state provided services to the nonprofit sector. We respectfully ask the Committee to continue conversion of state-run services. Some examples of this are included in the proposed budget. The CT Community Nonprofit Alliance has conducted a review which forecasts that more than \$100 million annually can be saved through the conversion of state-operated Local Mental Health Authority services to community nonprofit providers.

Second, I would like to raise issues related to the DMHAS budget. Connecticut is in a public health crisis now related to opioid-related accidental deaths, related mental health issues, and social determinants of health. In my work over the years in this field there have been numerous trends and issues to address – and nothing like this. A budget which decreases DMHAS grant funding for addiction and mental health services at this time is not in the best interest of our State and its residents, especially since this comes on top of DMHAS reductions going back to the FY13 budget totaling more than \$26 million and the FY17 budget holdbacks. The holdbacks in FY17 were especially hard on providers and those they serve, resulting in layoffs program closures and service disruptions. The Governor has proposed annualizing those DHMAS cuts in the next biennium, a cut of \$14 million in each year. It is important to note that the Legislature did not approve these cuts by line item, and we ask that the Legislature not annualize them into the next biennium.

Thank you for listening today and for all your work in service to our State. I firmly believe that by working together, the State of Connecticut and its nonprofit sector providers can both address the financial challenges we face and continue to lead the way in how we serve those in need.

